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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4518  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 000343

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FOR EUR/WE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/01/2016

TAGS: AMGT FR

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL - INFORMAL

Classified By: PolMC Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 (B & D).

The following constitutes the Paris Points for January 30, 2007, pending repair of the classified email system.

(C) French Deny Push on Friendship Treaty with Algeria

(C) Christian Testo, MFA DAS-equivalent for the Maghreb, gave us a readout on January 29 of French National Assembly President Jean-Louis Debri's January 19-22 visit to Algiers, which came at the invitation of his Algerian counterpart. Testo confirmed that Debri delivered a letter from President Chirac to President Bouteflika, but said that the letter contained nothing substantive. Reports of the Chirac-Bouteflika letter engendered press speculation here that Chirac was making a last bid to conclude a French-Algerian Treaty of Friendship before leaving office; Testo said this was not the case, and said that Debri had gone somewhat further in trying to promote reconciliation (by proposing a joint Franco-Algerian parliamentary committee to work on questions related to France's colonization of Algeria and the subsequent War of Independence) than Chirac or the MFA would have preferred.

(S) Sayf al-Islam Offers to Solve Bulgarian Nurses Issue  
-- For a Price

(S) Testo also told us on January 29 that Sayf al-Islam Qaddafi met with Francois Touazi, FM Douste-Blazy's adviser on North Africa, the evening of January 25 to discuss a resolution to the case of the Bulgarian nurses imprisoned (and twice condemned to death) in Libya. Sayf told Touazi that he was personally taking charge of the issue and could guarantee results -- if only France and other European states would "make a (financial) gesture" to the families of the victims. Testo expressed irritation with what he saw as yet another Libyan attempt to shake down the Europeans for additional funds to resolve a problem of Tripoli's making.

(U) President Aliyev on France, Energy, Iran and Nagorno-Karabakh

(U) As the state visit of President Aliyev (Azerbaijan) commenced on January 29, the French daily Le Figaro published a short interview with him covering a number of key subjects. Aliyev, who characterized French/Azeri relations as "excellent," said the principal motivation of his visit was to develop business opportunities between France and Azerbaijan, but he noted that the timing also meant discussions would include energy, specifically what the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline could mean for Europe.

(U) On Iran, Aliyev expressed concern about possible

military action against a neighbor with whom they have very good relations, calling such action a "grave error and a catastrophe for the region." When asked about possible use of Azeri territory for American military action against Iran, he rejected the idea outright. On Nagorno-Karabakh he insisted the absence of progress was the fault of an unrealistic and uncompromising Armenian government, and called the December elections "totally illegal." He suggested the Armenians take what they could get now (maximum autonomy) because the atmosphere was changing and Azerbaijan, thanks to its energy resources, was becoming a much more powerful country. When prodded about the possibility of military action to regain control of the occupied territory, he said, "We prefer to do it peacefully without entering into a war. But if there are no other means, we will see."

(U) FM Douste-Blazy Proposes Two Stages for EU Constitution

(U) Speaking "personally" at a Warsaw conference on the future of the EU, FM Philippe Douste-Blazy proposed a two-stage approach to solving the current crisis over institutional reform. Douste-Blazy's proposals represent an apparent effort to square the circle between those advocating a full-fledged EU constitutional Treaty (either "as is" or even strengthened to counter-balance what many French perceive as the current draft's perceived "liberal" bias) and those (like center-right presidential candidate Nicolas Sarkozy) who favor a "mini" treaty focused solely on institutional reform. The main idea would be to conclude "rapidly" an agreement on institutional reforms -- for instance a European Council President elected for two

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and one-half years, a European MFA and reinforced cooperation) needed to take account of EU enlargement (presumably by the end of the French Presidency in 2008 at the latest) in order to permit a subsequent, more open-ended negotiation on other issues.

(U) Speaking separately, former Mitterrand FM Hubert Vedrine expressed skepticism, saying the idea was seductive but that it would run up against opposition from other member-states who want either to change or add to the language of the current constitutional treaty. He called instead for accompanying institutional reforms with ambitious projects designed to demonstrate to EU "citizens" the tangible utility of the European Union. Vedrine warned that "this institutional obsession" would not work; if "we do not create a more favorable climate, we risk confronting the refusals of the past."

(S) Turkish Ambassador Koruturk on Relations with France/EU, Middle East, PKK

(C) Turkish Ambassador Koruturk, accompanied by DCM Ozyildiz, provided Ambassador Stapleton January 29 a surprisingly upbeat -- even doggedly so under probing -- assessment of Turkey-France and Turkey-EU relations. He expressed optimism that the EU and France would come to appreciate Turkey's strategic value over time and professed to perceive only temporary obstacles in the closing of eight EU chapters for Turkey's accession negotiations. Although he admitted that presidential candidate Nicolas Sarkozy's exclusion of Turkey from EU membership posed problems, he stuck determinedly to his line that, if Sarkozy were elected president, increased access to information related to affairs of state would eventually impel him to change his views. In the interim, Koruturk judged, there was nothing that prevented Turkey from "readying" unopened chapters at its own initiative, so that they could be readied for early closure once negotiations commenced. He acknowledged that, for protocol purposes,

Turkish military attaches are boycotting the French defense ministry to protest the National Assembly's passage of legislation criminalizing denial of the Armenian "genocide;" he indicated that Turkey had also hinted at the potential loss of \$12 billion in contracts. It was notable that the subject of the Armenian "genocide" was the one issue on which Koruturk's composure was less than absolute.

(C) In a discussion of Turkey's neighborhood (Koruturk was previously Turkey's Iraq envoy), Koruturk contrasted Turkey's traditional foreign policy of building stability with Iran's of destabilizing its neighbors. He predicted that Iraq would remain a single country despite -- or paradoxically, because of -- its divisions. Koruturk depicted Syria as a weak country of limited influence that always had to belong to one camp or another in order to appear strong, arguing that it was for this reason essential to engage Syria in order to split it off from Iran. On Lebanon, he argued that it was important to engage Hezbollah in order to encourage it over time to put Lebanese national interests before those of its ties with Iran. Asked about U.S.-Turkey relations, Koruturk expressed the hope that U.S. forces would intervene soon against PKK elements in northern Iraq, saying that this was primarily an issue of importance for the Turkish public.

(S) On the PKK, the Turks indicated that cooperation with France remained less than perfect. They accused the French of not always providing complete information and noted that, in instances where the French considered individuals as "political" figures as opposed to simple terrorists, they were particularly less than cooperative.

(C) Missing Israeli Diplomat

(C) Rumors circulated in Paris late last week about the fate of an Israeli diplomat (reportedly a member of the Israeli DAO) who went missing several days earlier; we have been told by the MFA that the Israeli Embassy believes the diplomat, who was reportedly depressed following his recent divorce, took his own life. He apparently left behind a suicide note and his vehicle was retrieved from a waterway, but his body has not yet been found.

(U) Socialist Party Parliamentarian Expelled for Racist Comments

(U) A Socialist Party (PS) internal commission voted unanimously January 27 to expel parliamentarian and

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Languedoc-Roussillon regional president Georges Freche for his November 14 racist comments about the French national soccer team. In a public statement, PS representatives declared that Mr. Freche's remarks "are incompatible with the values of equality and respect for human rights which form the basis for the Socialist Party's declaration of principles as well as the constitutional foundation of our Republic." Regional PS members from Languedoc-Roussillon expressed their support for Freche, who himself denounced the expulsion as "an inquisition process that is reminiscent of the worst moments of Stalinism. They are offering my head to the people in hopes of winning a few more votes in the overseas departments." Freche's expulsion follows a 15,000 euro fine he received last Thursday for earlier discriminatory comments.

(U) Despite his criticism of his treatment, Freche, a founding member of the PS and deputy since 1973, called upon his fellow socialists to remain faithful to the party and to back Segolene Royal's candidacy. Freche also declared his intention to continue in his capacity as regional president.

(U) Matignon Considers "Secularism Charter for Public Services"

(U) The High Council of Integration (HCI) recommended to Prime Minister de Villepin on Monday that France adopt a "Secularism Charter for Public Services" aimed at reinforcing the French constitutional principle of strict religious neutrality in the public sphere. The charter, envisioned by its drafters as "a continuation of the Stasi Commission that resulted in the 2004 law banning conspicuous religious symbols in French schools," would act as a guide and be posted in public areas including election facilities, immigration centers, and notably in hospitals where religious objections have led to conflict in the past (in some cases, Muslim husbands have physically attacked male doctors treating their wives). HCI representatives expressed the hope that the charter would "remind consumers of public services that their right to religious expression is limited [and that they cannot] cite personal convictions as a justification for challenging public service providers or for demanding special treatment."

(U) President Chirac in December 2003 declared his support for a law preventing patients from refusing medical treatment by a doctor of the opposite sex.

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